

Description

Establishment of a transcoder-free operation connection

The invention relates to a method and device for establishing a transcoder-free operation connection (TrFO) between two communication terminals (MS) in a communication network.

In order to use transcoder-free operations (TrFO), a common codec type or in the case of a multi-rate codec type a common set or common configuration of codec modes has to be negotiated between the network units (UEs, RNCs, MSCs) involved. To this end, a switching unit (MSC) has access to a storage unit containing information about the radio network controller (RNC). The storage unit for example contains an input specifying the codec modes supported by the access network (UTRAN) or the radio network controller (RNC). This storage unit is downloaded by the operator for each O&M (operation and maintenance) device and contains a list of the codec modes.

However the access network UTRAN with radio network controllers RNC only supports quite specific combinations of codec modes. It would be too complex to support all codec modes in all combinations and would take up a large number of resources. The information required to negotiate the codec mode to be used for the transcoder-free operation is exchanged between the communication terminals (MSs) and switching units (MSCs) at the Iu interface by means of NAS signaling or at the Nc interface by means of BICC signaling.

According to the content of the storage unit, a radio network controller RNC 1 for example supports the codec modes a, b, c,

d, f in the combinations (codec mode configuration) a/b and b/c/d/f. The supported codec mode configurations have to be taken into account when negotiating the codec modes. Currently only individual codec modes are negotiated, not codec mode configurations, which each comprise a number of codec modes. This means that it is sometimes not possible to establish a TrFO connection, as with the plurality of possible codec mode configurations (15 codec mode configurations are currently defined), it is very probable that the two radio network controllers RNCs involved in negotiating a TrFO connection support an overlapping number of identical modes but only in different codec mode configurations. If the radio network controller RNC2 supports the code mode configurations "a/b/c" and "f/g/h" for example, it is currently not possible to establish a transcoder-free operation connection between the radio network controller RNC1, which supports a/b and b/c/d/f, and the radio network controller RNC2.

The object of the present invention is therefore to provide a simple and effective means of increasing the probability that a transcoder-free operation connection can be established between two communication terminals.

According to the invention this object is achieved respectively by the subject matter of the independent claims. Developments of the invention are set out in the subclaims.

The essence of the invention is that, in the event of a request from a switching unit relating to the use of at least one subset of a codec mode configuration for the establishment of a transcoder-free operation connection, a radio network controller, which supports all the subsets of a supported codec mode configuration, checks whether the at least one

requested subset is supported. Such a subset comprises at least one, preferably at least two codec modes of a codec mode configuration but fewer than all the codec modes of the codec mode configuration. A transcoder-free operation connection is then established, if the result of the check is that at least this one subset is supported. To ensure compatibility with the Iu interface, the radio network controller signals to the communication terminal by means of a suitable message that data should only be sent in the uplink direction (from the communication terminal to the radio network controller) with the at least one supported subset of a codec mode configuration, as requested by the switching unit. One advantage of the invention is that the probability of a transcoder-free operation connection being set up between two communication terminals can be increased significantly in a simple and effective manner.

The invention is described in more detail below with reference to an exemplary embodiment illustrated in a figure, in which:

Figure 1 shows a simplified network architecture for the known negotiation of a codec mode for a connection between two communication terminals,

Figure 2 shows a simplified network architecture for the claimed method,

Figure 3 shows a claimed device for implementing the method.

Figure 1 shows a simplified network architecture for negotiating a codec mode for a connection between two communication terminals UE in for example a cellular mobile radio network, such as the UMTS network. The radio network controller RNC1 supports two different codec mode configurations (mode 1, 2 and mode 3, 4). In contrast all AMR

modes 1 to 4 are input in the RNC1 storage unit T1 of the controlling switching unit MSC1. The codec mode configurations supported by the radio network controller RNC1 are not taken into account. The second radio network controller RNC2 also supports two different codec mode configurations (mode 1, 2 and mode 4, 5). In the RNC2 storage unit T2 of the second switching unit MSC2 the codec mode configurations in the radio network controller RNC2 are in turn not taken into account. All AMR modes 1 to 5 are again input in the RNC2 storage unit T2. For codec negotiation the sending (originating) side with the switching unit MSC1, the RNC1 storage unit T1 and the radio network controller RNC1 transmits all supported codec types and modes, for example in the form of a list, table, etc., to the receiving (terminating) side with the switching unit MSC2, the RNC2 storage unit T2 and the radio network controller RNC2 (1). On the receiving side this list, table, etc. of supported codec types and modes is reduced by the types and modes that are not supported on the receiving side, one codec mode is selected with one codec mode configuration and sent back to the sending side (2). RAB (Radio Access Bearer) assignment is now initiated with the selected codec mode in the direction of the radio network controller RNC1 (3). As the radio network controllers RNC1 and RNC2 do not however support the selected codec mode configuration (1, 2, 4), the RAB assignment is rejected (4). A connection with a transcoder-free operation cannot therefore be set up between two communication terminals UE, for example mobile radio terminals, mobile computers, mobile organizers, etc.

Figure 2 describes the claimed method in a communication network, preferably a cellular mobile radio network. If a radio network controller RNC receives a request relating to the use of a subset (for example a/b) of a codec mode

configuration (for example a/b/c) for the establishment of a transcoder-free operation connection between two communication terminals, MS, it (RNC) checks whether the requested subset a/b is supported. The request can be sent in the form of a RAB (Radio Access Bearer) request from the switching unit MSC to the radio network controller RNC. If the requested subset is supported by the radio network controller RNC, a connection, e.g. a RAB (Radio Access Bearer) connection, is established to the switching unit MSC using the requested subset a/b of a codec mode configuration. A connection is established to an air interface or to the communication terminal MS from the radio network controller RNC using the codec mode configuration a/b/c, as the radio network controller has only stored all the necessary data (e.g. transport formats, SIR targets, etc.) for the codec mode configuration. However to ensure compatibility with the Iu interface, on which mode c is not permitted, the radio network controller RNC uses a signaling message, for example a Transport Combination Control Message TCCM, a radio resource control signaling, etc., to restrict the codec mode configuration to a permitted subset a/b negotiated with the switching unit. The signaling message or messages can also be signaled to the communication terminal MS in a number of parts or steps. Thus in a first step or part of the signaling message the codec mode configuration to be used with at least two codec modes could be transmitted to the communication terminal MS and in a second step or part of a signaling message the subset of a codec mode configuration to be used could be notified to the communication terminal MS. When using a codec mode, the communication terminal MS must restrict itself to the signaled subset. In this example, when data is sent in the uplink direction, the communication terminal can only use modes a and/or b. With this method it is then possible to increase significantly the probability of

setting up a TrFO connection between two communication terminals MS, as the access network UTRAN with for example radio network controllers RNC can support not only codec mode configurations but also their subsets, thereby enhancing the quality of the service considerably.

Figure 3 shows a claimed device for implementing the method, as described in Figure 2. The device, ideally a radio network controller RNC, has a send unit (S) and a receive unit (E) for mobile communication with further network units (MS, MSC). A processing unit (V) in the radio network controller RNC is used to check a request sent from a switching unit MSC relating to the use of a subset of a codec mode configuration for the establishment of a transcoder-free operation connection between two communication terminals MS. Moreover the processing unit establishes a connection both to the requesting switching unit MSC and to the communication terminal, if the requested subset is supported. A signaling message is also sent from the processing unit (V) via the send unit (S) to the communication terminal MS relating to the subset of the codec mode configuration to be used to transmit data to the radio network controller.